

# FIRST ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMUNITY FORUM HELD BY NAMI SOUTH CENTRAL

*By M.C. Harris, LACDMH Community Worker; Helena Ditko, PSW II, Family Advocate; and Isidoro Gonzalez, PSW I, Family Advocate*

On May 3, 2014, NAMI South Central Affiliates held the first annual forum to commemorate May as Mental Health Awareness Month. This much needed community event was well planned with over 100 in attendance at Charles R. Drew University. Margie Harper, NAMI South Central President, and the NAMI Community Committee did a stand-up job as hosts.

Auntie Rhonda Duran was the Mistress of Ceremonies and Poetic Speaker throughout the day.

The invocation was given by Rev. David J. Mayfield, Ph.D. and LACDMH Substance Abuse Counselor for Men's Central Jail, Twin Towers.

The first speaker was Candidate for L.A. County Sheriff, Bob Olmsted. Olmsted's presentation highlighted his personal awareness of a troubled jail system. The retired commander oversaw three facilities, including Men's Central Jail. He took a few questions from the audience and concluded, "There needs to be a more holistic approach to the criminal justice system in how we deal with crime and education."



Additional speakers included:

David J. Mayfield, LACDMH Substance Abuse Counselor, gave an exceptional presentation and overview of services from the standpoint of Twin Towers Correctional Facility. Rev. Mayfield presented on ten fundamental components of recovery.

Roy Brown, Director of the VET To VET program Los Angeles, presented on how the program began. He also inspired the group with his journey to wellness, hope and recovery from PTSD and related his journey to other Veterans. And the

Sandra E. Cox, Ph. D., CEO and founder of the Coalition of Mental health which was establish in 1992, dedicated the last 30 year of her life to South Los Angeles. She has the drive to help those who suffer from emotional trauma. She gave us an update on HIV / AIDS and her agency Coalition of Mental Health.

A tribute was given to Mitrice Richardson, a young intern who disappeared from the Malibu-Lost Hills Sheriff's Department on September 17, 2009. A documentary film has been made on her behalf.



Dr. Rick Williamson provided the final address with artful inspiration on how to address client needs. He is trained in dynamic therapy, as well as in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), proven effective for a variety of emotional issues. Committed to understanding the whole person, Dr. Williamson brought a deep understanding of how life situations, culture and beliefs impact a person's psyche and wellbeing.

The afternoon keynote speaker was Dr. Ronald Beavers of the Positive Imagery Foundation, a community based program. Dr. Beavers joined the Los Angeles Veterans Resource Center on April 14, 1997, serving combat veterans and their families from Vietnam for ten years. After the Persian Gulf Operations, Desert Storm and Shield, a critical need for direct community-based services to veterans and their families overwhelmed the VA service care system. The Veteran Service Outreach Program (VSOP) was created to fill the gap.



A free lunch was served with live entertainment; people were singing dancing to the soulful sounds of Promoted Academics through Creative Expression (PACE).